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# THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER

FOLK OPERA
IN ONE ACT

Book by
STEPHEN VINCENT BENET

Music by

**DOUGLAS MOORE** 

VOCAL SCORE

**BOOSEY & HAWKES** 

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# THE DEVIL and DANIEL WEBSTER

Folk Opera in One Act

Book by STEPHEN VINCENT BENET

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# CAST OF CHARACTERS

JABEZ STONE, a New Hampshire farmer	Bass
MARY STONE, his wife	
DANIEL WEBSTER, Secretary of State	
A FIDDLER	
MR. SCRATCH, a Boston lawyer	
JUSTICE HATHORNE	Speaking part
CLERK	Baritone
VOICE OF MISER STEVENS	
WALTER BUTLER	Speaking part
BLACKBEARD TEACH	
KING PHILIP SINGN CIPTY Jurors	Bass
SIMON GIRTY Juiots	Tenor
OTHER JURYMEN	

MEN AND WOMEN OF CROSS CORNERS, NEW HAMPSHIRE

The action takes place in the home of Jabez Stone, Cross Corners, N. H.

First performances by the American Lyric Theatre at the Martin Beck Theatre, New York, May 18 · 26, 1939

FRITZ REINER, Conductor

Staged by JOHN HOUSEMAN

Production designed and lighted by ROBERT EDMOND JONES

#### CASTS

Jabez Stone JOHN GURNEY Mary Stone NANCY McCORD BETTINA HALL Daniel Webster LANSING HATFIELD RICHARD HALE A Fiddler FRED STEWART	Justice Hathorne CLAIR KRAMER Clerk EDWARD MARSHALL Voice of Miser Stevens CLAIR KRAMER Walter Butler DON LEE Blackbeard Teach LAWRENCE SIEGLE Simon Girty ERNICE MARSHALL
Mr. Scratch GEORGE RASELY	King Philip PHILIP WHITFIELD

## SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY

"THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER" is laid in New Hampshire, in the forties. It begins with a country festival—the neighbors of Cross Corners celebrating the marriage of Jabez and Mary Stone. The Stones were always poor, but Jabez has prospered amazingly and they re talking of running him for governor. Everything goes well at first—Daniel Webster, the great New England hero, appears as a guest, and is given a real New Hampshire welcome. But there is another guest, too, and an unexpected one—a Boston lawyer named Scratch, who carries a black collecting box under his arm. His appearance terrifies Jabez, the song he sings horrifies the neighbors and when a lost soul, in the form of a moth, flies out of the collecting box, panic ensues. The neighbors realize that Jabez Stone has sold his soul to the devil, denounce him, and flee. Left alone with Mary, Jabez tells how he came to make his hideous bargain. They appeal to Daniel Webster who promises to help them. But the devil—Mr. Scratch—is an excellent lawyer too. When Webster demands a trial for his client, Scratch summons from the Pit a jury of famous American traitors and renegades and a hanging judge who presided at the Salem witch-trials. It is a jury of damned souls, and Webster seems about to lose, not only the case but his own soul's salvation, when, by his powers of oratory, he finally turns the tables on Scratch and rescues Jabez. The neighbors rush in to drive the Devil out of New Hampshire, and the case ends with pie breakfast, as it should.

-Stephen Vincent Benet.

## THE OPERA IS SCORED FOR LARGE ORCHESTRA AS FOLLOWS:

Two flutes, one interchangeable with piccolo Two oboes, one interchangeable with English horn Two Clarinets, one interchangeable with bass clarinet Two bassoons, one interchangeable with contrabassoon Two horns
Two trumpets
One trombone
Harp

Harp Timpani Percussion Strings

A Score for Small Orchestra with Electric Organ is also Available

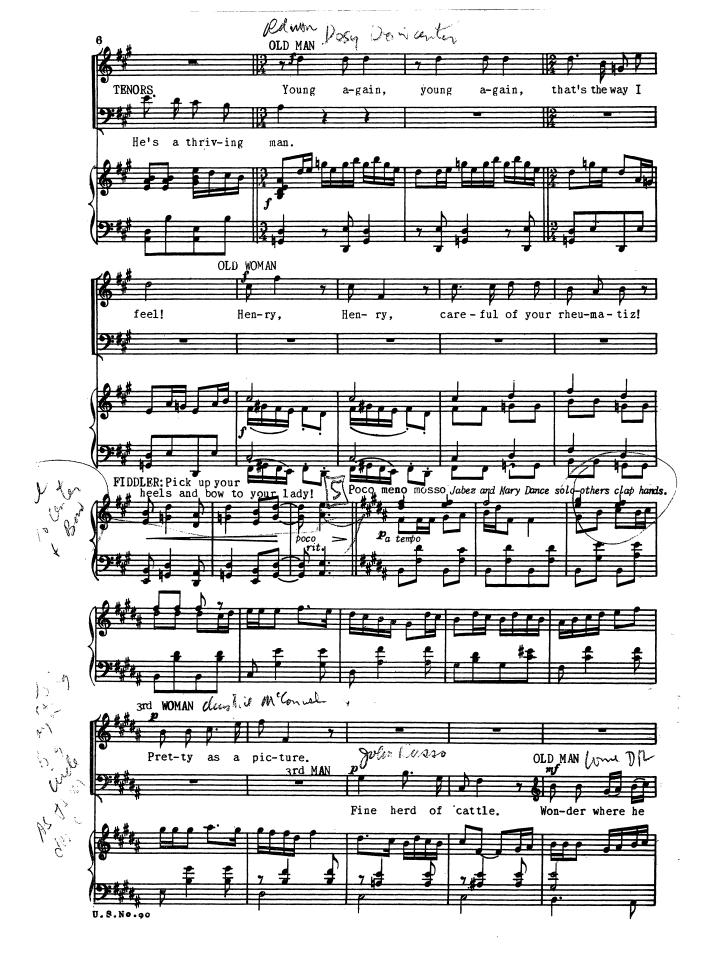
# The Devil and Daniel Webster

An Opera in One Act



















The fiddle squeaks and stops. The dancers mop their brows.

Whew! Ain't danced like that since I was kneehigh to a grasshopper.

ECOND MAN he Portland Fancy," Fiddler!

THIRD MAN

No, wait a minute, neighbors. Let's hear from the happy pair! Hey, Jabez!

FOURTH MAN Let's hear from the State Senator!

OTHERS

Speech! Speech!

OLD MAN

Might as well. It's the last time he'll have the last word.

OLD WOMAN

Now, Henry Banks, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

OLD MAN

Told you so, Jabez.

OTHERS

Speech.

[FIDDLER gives a flourish on his fiddle.]

JABEZ

[Embarrassed.]

Neighbors-friends-I'm not much of speaker-spite of your 'lecting me to State Senate-U.S. No.90

That's the ticket, Jabez. Smart man, Jabez-I voted for ye. Go ahead, Senator, you're doing

CROWD

JABEZ

But we're certainly glad to have you here, me and Mary. And we want to thank you for coming and—

A VOICE

Vote the Whig ticket!

ANOTHER VOICE

Hurray for Dan'l Webster!

JABEZ

And I'm glad Hi Foster said that, for those are my sentiments, too. Mr. Webster has promised to honor us with his presence tonight.

CROWD Hurray for Dan'l! Hurray for the greatest man in the U.S.!

JABEZ

And, when he comes, I know we'll give him a real New Hampshire welcome.

CROWD

Sure we will Webster forever! And to hell with Henry Clay!

JAREZ

And meanwhile—well, there's Mary and me and, if you folks don't have a good time, well, we won't feel right about getting married at all. Because I know I've been lucky—and I hope she feels that way, too. And, well, we're going to be happy or bust a trace. So there.

> [He wipes his brow to terrific applause and takes MARY's hand. They look at each other.]





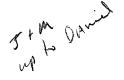












#### WERSTER

Neighbors—old friends—it does me good to hear you. But don't cheer me—I'm not running for President this summer.

[A laugh from the CROWD.]

I'm here on a better errand—to pay my humble respects to a most charming lady and her very fortunate spouse—

[There is the twang of a fiddlestring breaking and a muffled "Tarnation!" from the FIDDLER. WEBSTER blinks at the interruption, but goes on.]

We're proud of State Senator Stone in these parts—we know what he's done. Ten years ago he started out with a patch of land that was mostly rocks and mortgages—and now—well, you've only to look around you. I don't know that I've ever seen a likelier farm—not even at Marshfield—and I hope, before I die, I'll have the privilege of shaking his hand as Governor of this State. I don't know how he's done it—I couldn't have done it myself. But I know this. Jabez Stone wears no man's collar.

[At this statement, there is a discordant squeak from the fiddle, and JABEZ STONE looks embarrassed. WEBSTER knits his brows.]

And what's more, if I know Jabez, he never will. But I didn't come here to talk politics—I came to kiss the bride.

[He does so among great applause. He shakes hands with STONE.]

Congratulations, Stone—you're a lucky man. And now, if our friend in the corner will give us a tune on his fiddle.

[Pause.]

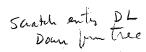
#### WEBSTER

[A trifle irritated.]

I said, if our friend in the corner would give us a tune on his fiddle.

#### FIDDLER

[Passionately throwing fiddle down.]
Hell's delight—excuse me, Mr. Webster. But



the very devil's got into that fiddle of mine. She was doing all right up to just a minute ago. But now I've tuned her and tuned her, and she won't play a note I want.

[And, at this point, MR. SCRATCH makes his appearance. He has entered, unobserved, from the other side of the stage and mixed with the CROWD while all eyes were on DAN-IEL WEBSTER. He is, of course, the devil—a New England devil, dressed like a rather shabby attorney, but with something just a little wrong about his clothes and appearance—possibly his gloved hands, certainly his air. He carries a large, black, tin box, like a botanist's collecting box, under one arm. Now he slips through to the front rank of the CROWD and confronts the FIDDLER.]

#### MR. SCRATCH

Maybe you need some rosin on your bow, fiddler.

#### FIDDLER

Maybe I do and maybe I don't. But who are you? I don't remember seeing you before.

#### SCRATCH

Oh, I'm just a friend—a humble friend of the bridegroom's.

[He turns toward JABEZ.]

[A pologetically.]

I'm afraid I came in the wrong way, Mr. Stone—you've improved the place so much since I last saw it, that I hardly knew the front door. But, I assure you, I came as fast as I could.

#### JABEZ

[Obviously shocked.]

It—it doesn't matter.

[With a great effort.]

Mary—Mr. Webster—this is a—a friend of mine from Boston—a legal friend. I didn't expect him today, but—

#### SCRATCH

Oh, my dear Mr. Stone—an occasion like this -I wouldn't miss it for the world.

[He bows.]

Charmed, Mrs. Stone. Delighted, Mr Webster. But-don't let me break up the merriment of the meeting-

He turns and puts his collecting box down on a table.]

#### FIDDLER

[With a grudge, to SCRATCH.] Boston lawyer, eh?

SCRATCH

You might call me that.

FIDDLER

And what have got in that big, tin box of yours? Law papers?

SCRATCH

Oh—curiosities, for the most part. I'm a collector, too.

## FIDDLER

Don't hold much with Boston curiosities myself. And you know about fiddling too, do ye? Know all about it?

SCRATCH

Oh-

[A deprecatory shrug.]

#### FIDDLER

Don't shrug your shoulders at me—I ain't no Frenchman. Telling me I needed more rosin!

#### MARY

[**Trying** to stop the quarrel.] Isaac-please-

#### FIDDLER

Sorry, Mary-Mrs. Stone. But I been playing the fiddle at Cross Corners weddings for twentyfive years. And now here comes a stranger from Boston and tells me I need more rosin.

#### SCRATCH

But, my good friend-

#### FIDDLER

Rosin indeed! Here—play it yourself then and see what you can make of it!

He thrusts the fiddle into SCRATCH'S hands and retires in a huff. ] gis DL Thu 11

#### SCRATCH

[With feigned embarrassment.]

But really—I—

[He bows toward STONE.]

Shall I—Mr. Senator?

[JABEZ makes a helpless gesture of assent.]

MARY

[To JABEZ.]

Mr. Stone-Mr. Stone-are you ill?

JABEZ

No-no-but I feel-it's hot-

#### WEBSTER

[Chuckling.]

Don't you fret, Mrs. Stone. I've got the right medicine for him.

[He pulls a flask from his pocket.]

Ten-year-old Medford, Stone—I buy it by the keg, down in Marshfield. Here-

[He tries to give some of the rum to JABEZ.]

No—Mary—Mr. Webster.

[With a burst.]

Oh, let him play—let him play! Don't you see he's bound to? Don't you see there's nothing we can do?

> [Rustle of discomfort among the guests. SCRATCH draws the bow across the fiddle in a horrible discord.]















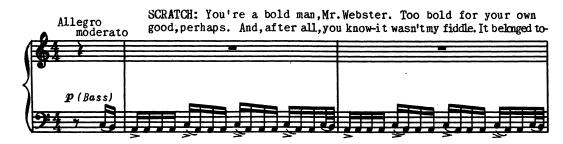


WEBSMER: Stop! Stop! You miserable wretch - can't you see that you're frightening Mrs. Stone? (He wrenches the fiddle out of Scratch's hands and tosses it aside.)
And now, sir - out of this house!

Cue-WEBSTER: And now sir, out of this house.

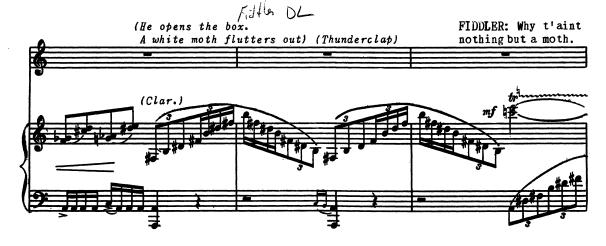
(Dialog follows the music)

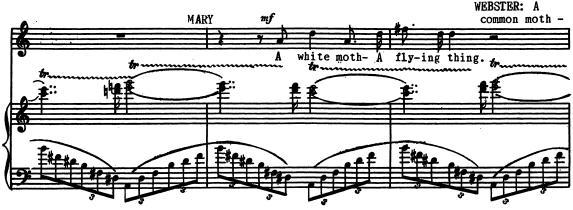
(Voice of the moth from orchestra pit, loud speaker off stage, or from concealed singer on stage.)



SCRATCH: (to fiddler) Idiot, what are you doing with my collecting box? FIDDLER: Boston lawyer, eh? Well I don't think so. I think you've got something in that box of yours you're afraid to show. And by jingo -



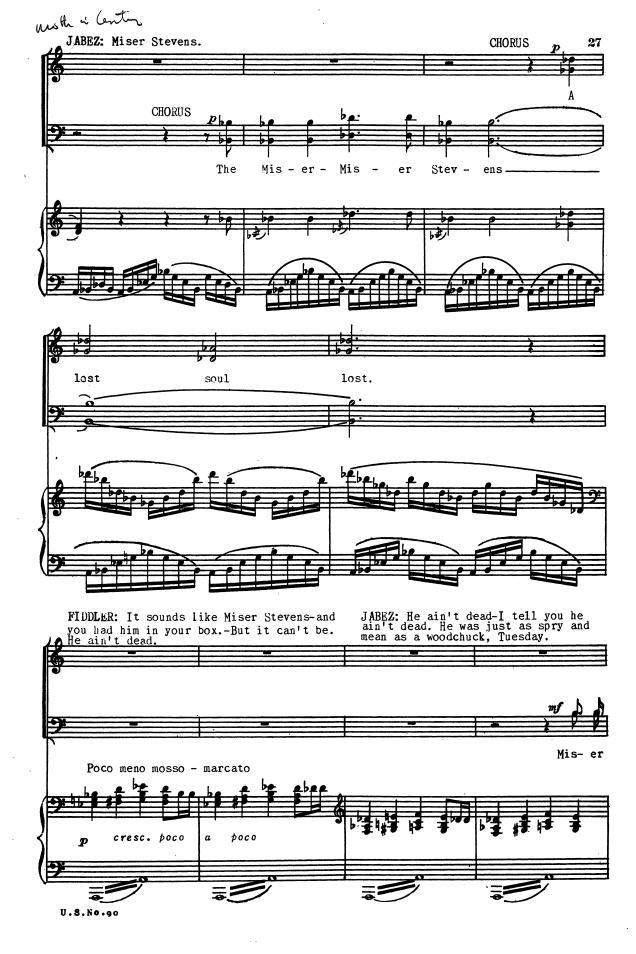




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26 Telea polyphemus FIDDLER: But it ain't no common moth! I seen WOMEN it! And it's got a death's head on it! A moth just a moth a moth WEBSTER: What's that? It MARY VOICE OF MOTH wails like a lost soul. me, neigh - bors! Help me! Help chorus soul lost soul. lost 1ost sou1 in dark -ness, in the FIDDLER: It sounds VOICE OF MOTH like Miser Stevens. He1p me, neigh -

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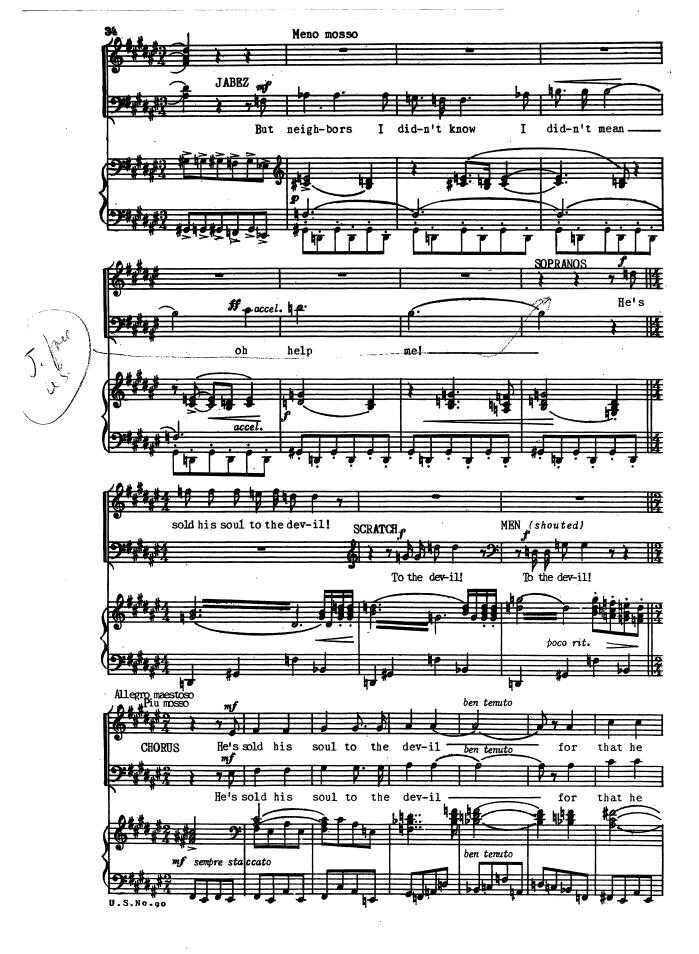










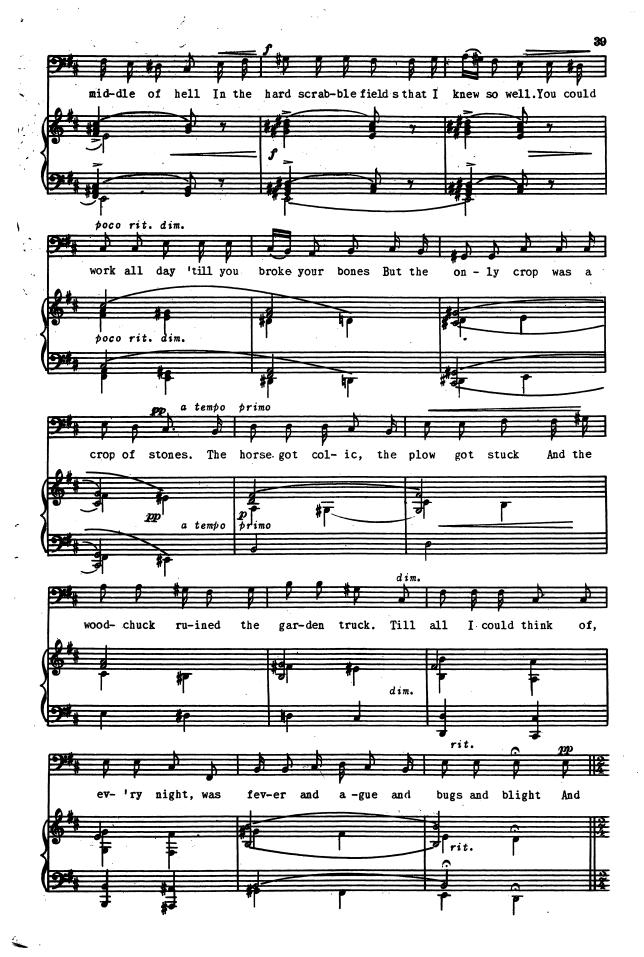














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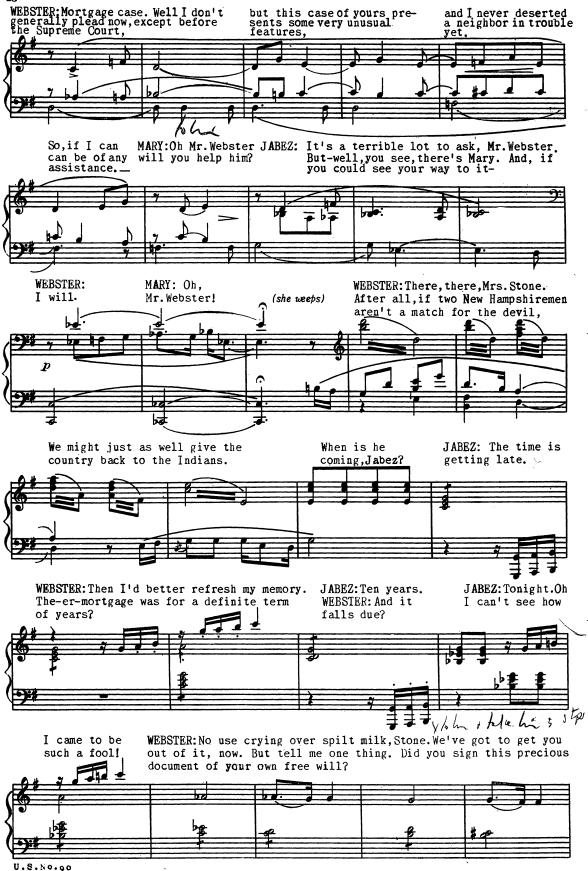


















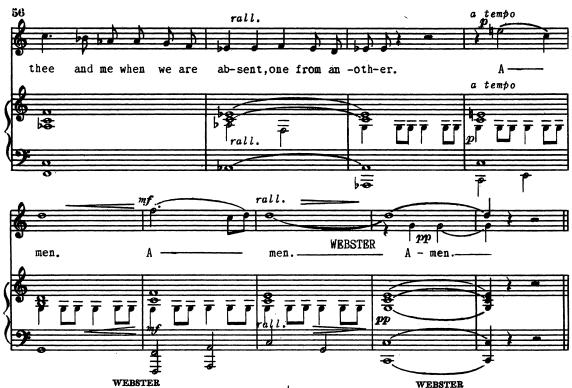












I AND

Amen.

[MARY has gone.]

## JABEZ

Thank you, Mr. Webster. She ought to go. But I couldn't have made her do it.

## WEBSTER

Well, Stone—I know ladies—and I wouldn't be surprised if she's still got her ear to the keyhole. But she's best out of this night's business. How long have we got to wait?

Sidner or beach

JABEZ

[Beginning to be terrified again.]

Not long—not long.

## WEBSTER

Then I'll just get out the jug, with your permission, Stone. Somehow or other, waiting's wonderfully shorter, with a jug.

[He gets jug and glasses, puts them on table, drinks and enjoys it.]

Ten-year-old Medford. There's nothing like it. I saw an inch worm take a drop of it once and he stood right up on his hind legs and bit a bee. Come and try a nip.

## JABEZ

There's no joy in it for me.

Oh come, man, come! Just because you've sold your soul to the devil, that needn't make you a teetotaler.

[He laughs and passes the jug to STONE, who tries to pour from it. But at that moment a clock begins to strike the three-quarters and STONE spills the liquor.]

## JABEZ

Oh God!

## WEBSTER

Never mind—it's a nervous feeling, waiting for a trial to begin. I remember my first case

JABEZ

'Tain't that.

[He turns to WEBSTER.] A THE WIT

Mr. Webster—Mr. Webster. For God's sake. Mr. Webster, harness your horses and get away from this place as fast as you can!

## WEBSTER

[Placidly.]

You've brought me a long way, neighbor, to tell me you don't like my company.

# JABEZ

Miserable wretch that I am! I've brought you a devilish way and now I see my folly. Let him claw into me if he wants to—I don't hanker after it, I must say, but I can stand it. But you're the Union's stay and New Hampshire's pride. He mustn't get you, Mr. Webster—he mustn't get you!

put his down

I'm obliged to you, neighbor Stone. It's kindly thought of. But there's a jug on the table and a case in hand. And I never left a jug or a case half-finished in my life

[Knock at the door. JABEZ gives a cry.]

Ah, I thought your clock was a trifle slow, neighbor Stone. Come in!

[SCRATCH enters from the night.]

Left & Charle DR ?

Mr. Webster! This is a pleasure!

Attorney of record for Jabez Stone. Might I ask your name?

## SCRATCH

I've gone by a good many. Perhaps Scratch will do for the evening. I'm often called that in these regions. May I?

[He sits at the table and pours a drink from the jug. The liquor steams as it pours into the glass while STONE watches, terrified.]

And now, I call upon you, as a law-abiding citizen, to assist me in taking possession of my property.

Not so fast, Mr. Scratch. Produce your evidence-if you have it.

[SCRATCH takes out a black pocketbook and examines papers.]

## SCRATCH

Slattery—Stanley—Stone.

Takes out a deed.

There, Mr. Webster. All open and aboveboard and in due and legal form. Our firm has its reputation to consider—we only deal in the one way.

# WEBSTER

[Taking deed and looking it over.]

H'm. This appears—I say it appears—to be properly drawn. But, of course, we contest the signature.

# **SCRATCH**

[Suddenly turning on Stone and shooting a finger at him.]

Is that your signature?

uslbach

[Wearily.] You know damn well it is. U.S.No.90

Keep quiet, Stone. US + L & Lend To SCRATCH.

But that is a minor matter. This precious document isn't worth the paper it's written on. The law permits no traffic in human flesh.

## SCRATCH

Oh, my dear Mr. Webster! Courts in every State in the Union have held that human flesh is property, and recoverable. Read your Fugitive Slave Act. Or shall I cite Brander versus McRae?

## WEBSTER

But in the case of the State of Maryland versus Four Barrels of Bourbon-

### SCRATCH

That was overruled, as you know, sir. North Carolina versus Jenkins and Co.

### WEBSTER

[Unwillingly.]

You seem to have an excellent acquaintance with the law, sir.

#### SCRATCH

Sir, that is no fault of mine. Where I come from, we have always gotten the pick of the Bar.

## WEBSTER

[Changing his note, heartily.]

Well, come now, sir. There's no need to make hay and oats of a trifling matter, when we're both sensible men. Surely we can settle this little difficulty out of court. My client is quite prepared to offer a compromise.

SCRATCH smiles.

## WEBSTER

A very substantial compromise.

[SCRATCH smiles more broadly, slowly shaking his head.

Damn it, man, we offer ten thousand dollars! [SCRATCH sighs, "No".]

Twenty thousand—thirty—name your figure! I'll raise it if I have to mortgage Marshfield!

Quite useless, Mr. Webster. There is only one thing I want from you—the execution of my contract.

## WEBSTER

But this is absurd. Mr. Stone is now a State Senator. The property has greatly increased in value!

#### SCRATCH

The principle of caveat emptor still holds, Mr. Webster.

[He yawns and looks at the clock.]

And now, if you have no further arguments to adduce—I'm rather pressed for time—

### WEBSTER

# [Thundering.]

Pressed or not, you shall not have this man. Mr. Stone is an American citizen, and no American citizen may be forced into the service of a foreign prince. We fought England for that in '12 and we'll fight all hell for it again!

## SCRATCH

Foreign? And who calls me a foreigner?

## WEBSTER

Well, I never yet heard of the dev—of your claiming American citizenship.

## SCRATCH

And who with better right? When the first wrong was done to the first Indian, I was there. When the first slaver put out for the Congo, I stood on her deck. Am I not in your books and stories and beliefs from the first settlements on?

Am I not spoken of still, in every church in New England? 'Tis true the North claims me for a Southerner and the South for a Northerner, but I am neither. I am merely an honest American like yourself—and of the best descent—for to tell the truth, Mr. Webster, though I don't like to boast of it, my name is older in the country than yours.

### WEBSTER

Aha! Then I stand on the Constitution! I demand a trial for my client.

### SCRATCH

The case is hardly one for an ordinary jury—and, indeed, the lateness of the hour—

### WEBSTER

Let it be any court you choose, so it is an American judge and an American jury. Let it be the quick or the dead. I'll abide the issue!

SCRATCH

You have said it. V is n ) durid

[He points his finger at the place where the jury is to appear. Clap of thunder—lights blink—music. As he recites his incantation the light in the jury box gradually strengthens and the ghost-like figures of the jurymen are seen seated there.]





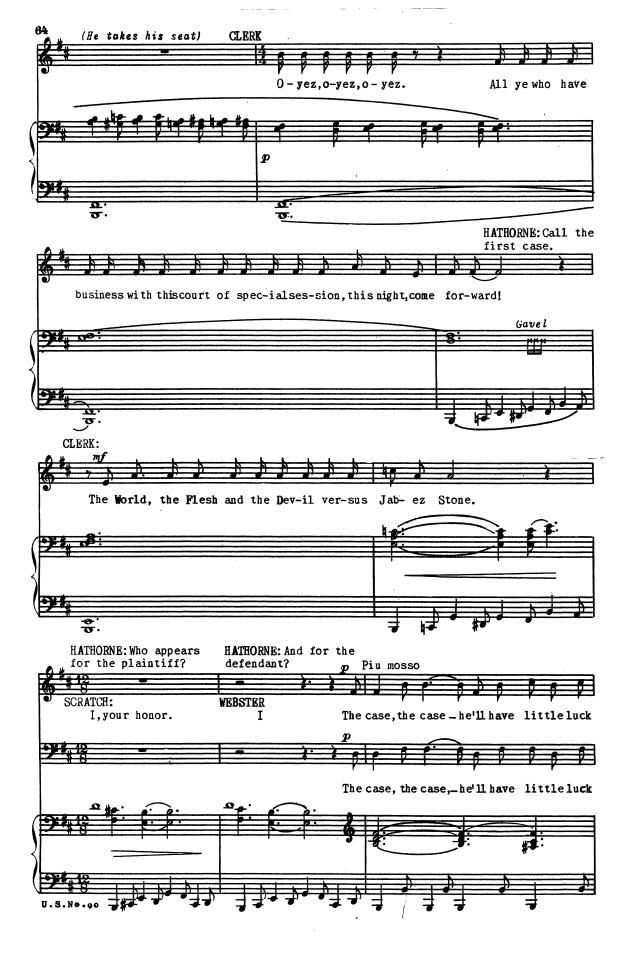








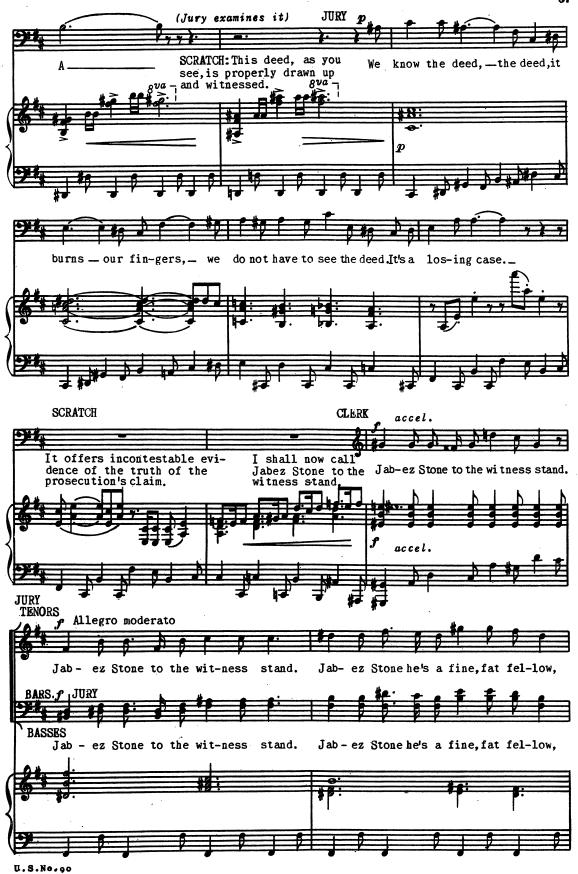








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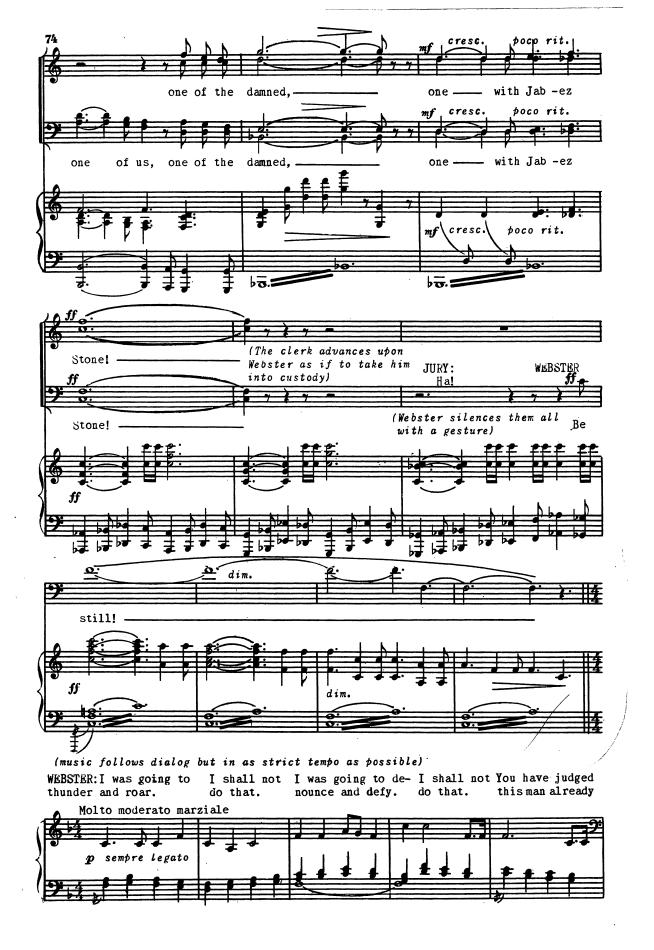






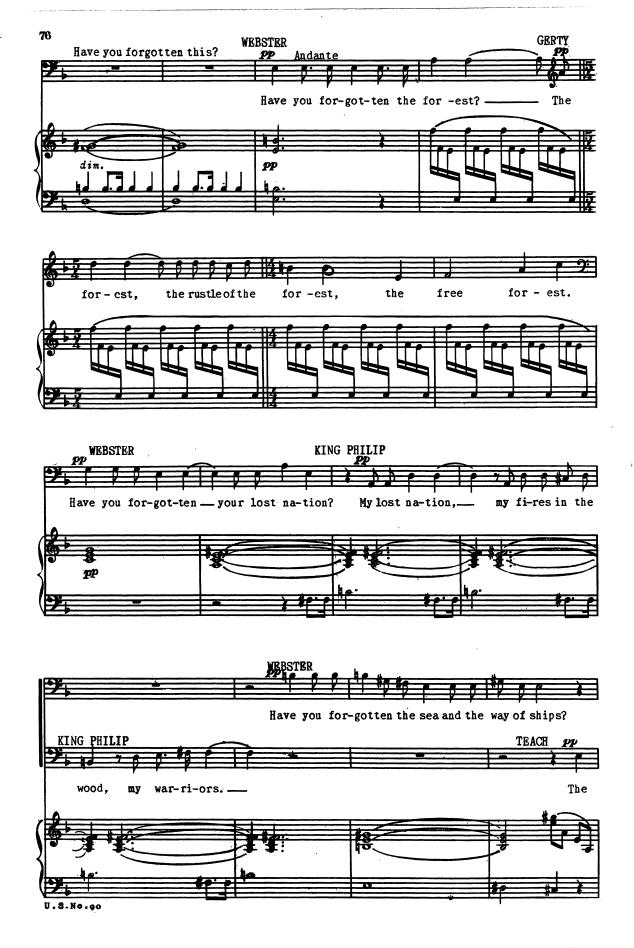




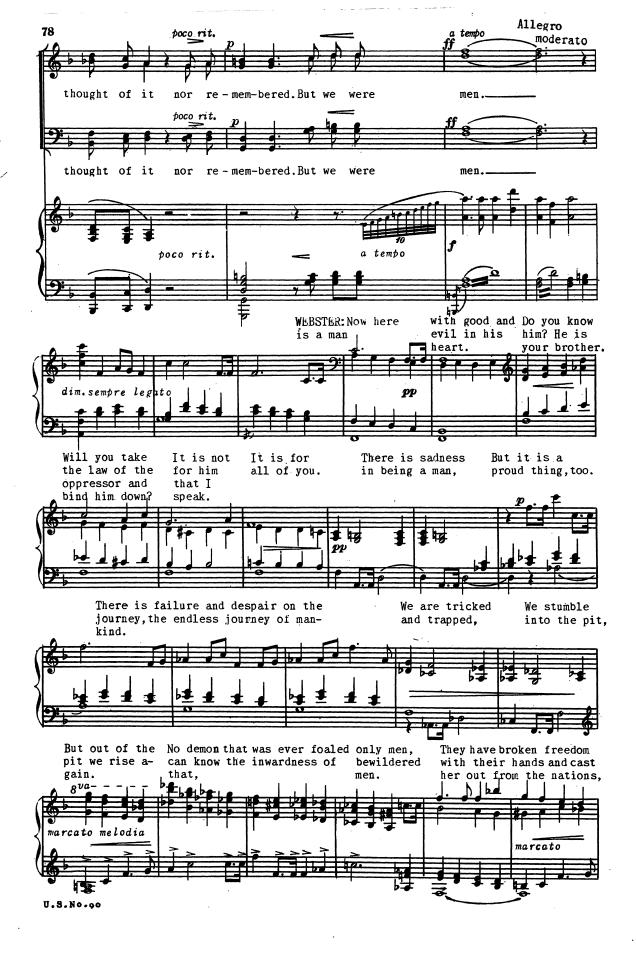




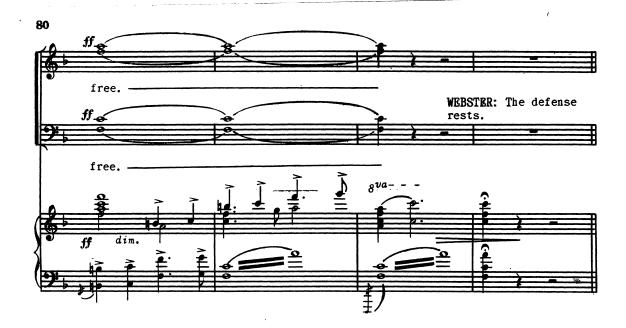
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#### HATHORNE

[Rapping with gavel.]

The jury will retire to consider its verdict.

[Pause.]

### BUTLER

# [Rising.]

The jury has considered its verdict. We find for the defendant, Jabez Stone!

### SCRATCH

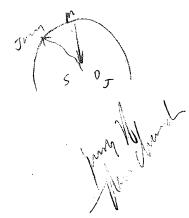
[Protesting.]

Your Honor!

## BUTLER

Perhaps 'tis not strictly in accordance with the evidence. But even the damned may salute the eloquence of Mr. Webster.

[Swell of music. A trumpet call like the cry of a cock. JUDGE, CLERK and JURY vanish.]



QUARTET





















Bush Scroth 89 drive old Scratch a - way. drive old. Scratcha - way. old drive Scratch -For ev er drive old Scratch a - way. For - ev er a day we'll drive old Scratch aand a day, we'll drive old Scratch a -way, For - ev Swater off. a fday ev - er and er BReak and a day, we'll drive old Scratch a - way, for- ey - er. Pie for break-fast Down a groups Iran Set da er and Pie for break-fast South







Englished .



